



**U.S. REPRESENTATIVE TOM UDALL
ADDRESS TO THE 48TH LEGISLATURE OF NEW MEXICO**

**STATE CAPITOL BUILDING
SANTA FE, NEW MEXICO
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Good morning. Lt. Governor Denish, President Pro-Tempore Altamirano, and the distinguished Members of New Mexico's 48th Legislature, thank you for inviting me to address you today.

This is the fifth time as a Member of Congress I've had the honor of speaking with you here in the Roundhouse. It is always a highlight for me to inform you about what is happening in the Congress, and specifically about some of the priorities I will be working on in the Congress during the next two years.

Many of you know the song lyrics, "what a difference a day makes. Twenty-four little hours." Well, to paraphrase that song, I'm here a little over two years since my last address to you to say in Congress, what a difference two years makes.

The change in the majority in Congress gives us the opportunity to finally tackle many issues that were either not addressed, or not addressed fully by the previous majority.

And I am proud of what we have accomplished at the start of the 110th Congress.

During the first one hundred hours of the new Congress, the House of Representatives passed several bills with broad, bipartisan support to shore up our national and economic security, and to move America in a New Direction.

After revamping our rules to enact new Ethics Rules to clean up the swamp that Washington had become, we tackled many of the most pressing needs of the country.

We passed legislation to fully implement the recommendations of the 9/11 Commission. When implemented, this will make our country safer.

We passed legislation to cut in half the interest rates on federal student loans. This will make college more affordable for millions of students, including over 40,000 in New Mexico.

We passed legislation to grant authority to the Secretary of Health and Human Services to negotiate lower drug prices with pharmaceutical companies on behalf of Medicare beneficiaries. This will help bring down the cost of prescription drugs for our seniors.

And we also passed legislation to increase the minimum wage from five dollars and fifteen cents to seven dollars and twenty-five cents. This ended almost ten years of inaction on the minimum wage, the longest stretch without an increase in history. This action will help 68,000 low-wage workers in New Mexico immediately, and it will have a positive impact for all.

As I said, what a difference two years makes.

Sadly though, there are other pressing issues of great importance that over the past two years have proven to be extremely challenging; issues on which we have not achieved as much progress, but on which we must do so, and do so now.

Since I last spoke to you, sectarian violence has engulfed Iraq in a Civil War. Thousands of Iraqi citizens have been killed and attacks continue unabated every day. In monetary terms, the war has cost the United States over four hundred billion dollars to date, with hundreds of billions more on the horizon.

But that is not the true cost to our nation.

The true cost is in the lives lost of our brave soldiers or those courageous men and women who have been wounded. Over 3,100 of our nation's soldiers have lost their lives and over 23,000 have been wounded.

I've seen first hand our wounded soldiers in visits to our military hospitals. And believe me, these are some of the most serious injuries received by our troops in any war or conflict.

Here at home, twenty-three of New Mexico's bravest sons and daughters have paid the ultimate sacrifice, and over 200 have been wounded in Iraq.

We owe them and their families a debt of gratitude that is immeasurable.

But what should we do?

I believe the time has long passed for us to move our soldiers out of the Iraqi Civil War. They have done everything that has been asked of them and more. They have served bravely and honorably, but they cannot be asked to calm the sectarian violence without action from the leadership in the war-torn nation. And that action has yet to materialize, nor does it appear to be on the horizon.

I have called for the redeployment of our troops out of Iraq as soon as it is practicable. And we must begin that process now.

While the situation in Iraq is certainly the most pressing issue of the day, our nation faces many other monumental tasks as well. The challenges of Global Warming and the related issue of America's energy independence are staring us right in the face.

Thanks to your and Governor Richardson's leadership, as well as countless New Mexicans who are active and engaged in the process, New Mexico is outpacing much of the rest of the country on these issues. New Mexico's savings of over 10 millions tons of Carbon Dioxide is a very positive step.

I am doing my best to push the House of Representatives in a New Direction on Global Warming and Energy Independence as well.

Our country, and in fact the world, is at a crossroads concerning energy sources and supplies. Oil, natural gas and coal have been the wellspring for unprecedented growth and prosperity over

the last 100 years. We know it well here, being one of the top five states for both oil and gas development; and I am proud of the role our energy industry plays in New Mexico.

Harnessing the power of fossil fuels has truly changed the way humans live. Advances in manufacturing and transportation powered by fossil fuels have transformed the way the world works. However, we now realize, it has come with unexpected costs and consequences.

I'm sure many of you are familiar with the book or saw the movie, *The Perfect Storm*. It recounted the devastation wrought by a huge storm that developed when three separate storm systems converged over the ocean near New England.

Right now, I fear another perfect storm is brewing because of our overwhelming dependence on fossil fuels.

First, the burning of fossil fuels releases into the atmosphere carbon that has been stored in the earth for millions of years. In effect, we are overwhelming the earth system's natural carbon cycle by taking carbon that has been out of the cycle for millions of years and injecting it into the atmosphere.

Second, I believe the world's ability to produce oil and gas is at or near a peak, while demand continues to rise. This does not mean that we are likely to run out of oil in the near future. It does mean, however, that we are running out of the cheap, easily extractable oil our economy has depended on for decades.

Third, we are sending about 25 million dollars an hour abroad to pay for foreign oil. This act is undermining our economy and also funding terrorist groups bent on disrupting our way of life. However, turning our focus to domestic oil production as a security measure is meaningless. At our current consumption of nearly 21 million barrels of oil per day, the United States' known reserves could keep our country running at full speed for only three years.

These three storms are brewing ever larger on the horizon. The forecasts for the potential damage they may wreak on America's economy, environment, public health, and national security are becoming more and more urgent every day.

But there is no silver bullet that will solve our energy challenges. It must be a multi-faceted approach. With that in mind I am working on several bills designed to tackle different pieces of the energy puzzle.

For example, a few weeks ago I introduced a bipartisan bill that would require most retail sellers of power to incorporate 20 percent renewable energy into their energy mix by 2020. I'm proud to say that, in doing so, I am merely following the model already set by you here in New Mexico.

We have a standard here, as you all well know, requiring 10 percent renewable energy by 2011 and, because that goal has already been practically met, you are now considering strengthening it. I applaud your leadership and hope we can emulate it at the national level.

We also know the gains that could be achieved by mandating efficiency standards in our vehicles and buildings. In fact, the U.S. building sector accounts for about one-half of all energy consumption and greenhouse gas emissions annually.

Some of you may already have known this because of one of our very own Santa Feans, Ed Mazria. Ed is a national expert on green buildings and is leading the “Architecture 2030” effort. In January of 2006, the Architecture 2030 coalition issued the “2030 Challenge,” a global initiative stating that all new buildings and major renovations reduce their fossil-fuel Greenhouse Gas emitting consumption by 50% by 2010, and all new building should be carbon neutral by 2030.

I know Governor Richardson and you are taking steps to reduce GHG emissions and energy consumption of state buildings, issuing an executive order committing the state to the fifty percent reduction target. I am pleased to be working with Ed on this effort at the national level.

I will be introducing soon legislation based on the Architecture 2030 challenge. The legislation will establish minimum building energy performance standards for all federal buildings, with a declining cap beginning after 2010 that will ultimately result in carbon neutral federal buildings. The legislation will also extend and increase the deduction amount of several important tax provisions that encourage construction of energy efficient commercial and residential buildings, and for installing energy efficient systems in existing buildings.

The federal government needs to lead through example to encourage reduced fossil-fuel energy consumption and greenhouse gas emissions, in the “built” environment. With my bill, we will begin to do just that.

So too must our nation lead in the effort to reduce greenhouse gas emissions across a broader spectrum than just the building sector.

The United States has only about two percent of the world’s population, yet we contribute approximately twenty-five percent of the world’s greenhouse gas emissions.

Most Americans know we need to act now to confront this urgent crisis.

This sentiment is clearly growing among the American people and finally it is being reflected by the current leadership of Congress and their resolve to act on global warming. However, passing any climate change policy in Congress that can be signed by the President is a daunting task; it still is an uphill battle. Many are still reluctant to embrace mandatory caps on emissions levels. And they remain so, even despite the recent report by the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change of the United Nations, which concluded for the first time that global warming is “unequivocal” and that human activity is the main driver, “very likely” causing most of the rise in temperatures since 1950.

This report confirmed what many of us already suspected, and makes it clear it is time the debate on climate change move from discussion about whether it is real and attributable to human activity to the difficult job of designing a policy that will first slow, then stabilize, and ultimately reduce greenhouse gas emissions without harming U.S. businesses and jobs. However, any realistic debate on global warming policy in Congress must address the necessity of controlling costs, engaging developing countries, and creating a long-term solution to the problem.

That is why last year I introduced the Keep America Competitive Global Warming Policy Act. This legislation is a bipartisan, moderate, certain, and efficient global warming policy that will put our country on the path toward reducing greenhouse gas emissions without jeopardizing our nation’s economy and global competitiveness.

We must combat the growing threats to our nation's health and well-being from the certainty of climatic changes due to global warming, and we must do so now. There are significant economic realities that must be considered while crafting a global warming policy. To do otherwise would only set us up for failure, for repealed legislation, and for an erosion of the public's confidence.

My friends, we have made progress on many of challenges facing us. And we will continue to do so. But the challenge our nation faces on Global Warming must be dealt with now. To wait imperils our state, our nation, and our world.

I've discussed many important issues this morning – both foreign and domestic. I am hopeful that two years from now I will come before you to say the Congress accomplished a great deal to solve many of these problems. I am optimistic that we'll have moved America in a New Direction, and then I'll truly be able to say "what a difference two years makes."

Thank you again for your invitation to join you today. I want to wish you every success in the closing weeks of your session, and I look forward to our continued positive working relationship on behalf of the citizens of this great state.